



# Dynamics of Mayors' Political Affiliation: the Case of Romania

- one year before the local elections in 2004 -

Bucharest  
October 2003

## Methodology

The present material represents the *Dynamics of Mayors' Political Affiliation: the case of Romania*, one year before the local elections in 2004. The gathering of the data was carried out by consulting the membership lists provided by the political parties, except for the Social Democratic Party (PSD) that did not provide that information. At the same time, the study used the data received from the County Councils' Presidents from all over the country (except Bacau County) and the data received from the Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs which contained the results of the partial elections organized since 2000. All these data were correlated with the press information, by monitoring four national newspapers (Adevarul, Evenimentul Zilei, Jurnalul National and Romania Libera) between July 2001 and August 2003. The resulting data were compared with the Institute's data-base that contains the elected mayors in the local elections from 2000, and also with the results of mayors' political migration, one year after the local elections. Whenever the mayor's political affiliation was disputed by more than one party, individual telephonic checking was carried out, during August and September. This research was finished before the National Liberal Party (PNL) - Democratic Party (PD) alliance.

## Introduction

Concerned with the problem of political stability at the local level, viewed as an equilibrium and consistence factor for elaborating and implementing the local public policies, the Institute for Public Policy (IPP) elaborated, with its own resources, this material in order to support the necessary discussions before the electoral year 2004, and the end of the present Government term. This is the second evaluation that the Institute elaborated, after the one in 2001 (Political Migration in Local Public Administration one year after the local elections in 2000<sup>1</sup>).

The material contains comments and graphics related to the mayors' migration in Romania in 2003. The texts are both referring to the political reasons that determined the migration as well as to the considerations regarding the budgetary implications of the phenomenon in the local public administration.

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<sup>1</sup> Copies of the 2001 report are available at the Institute's office as well as on its web site.

## **A few Considerations on the Political Events Resulting in Effects at the Local Level of the Political Party's Activities**

After the electoral year 2000 completed, a series of changes in the political affiliation occurred all over the country, local and national leaders getting engaged in different political projects that were aimed at strengthening and increasing the percentage obtained at the elections.

The present material does not aim to accomplish a political analysis on the political parties' evolution after 2000. Still, a series of events like splitting and merging, affecting mayors' migration, have been taken into consideration. The attached analysis represents a radiography the Romanian mayors' political situation, in order to facilitate a debate related to the following issues:

1. the impact that the growing phenomenon of mayors' political migration has upon the stage of the public administration reform, especially at the local level, and, closely related to the fiscal reform, constantly criticized of lack of objectivity, as well as
2. to the feeling of belonging to the political values that some of the locally elected representatives place on a secondary level compared to the material, political, conjectural interests, and also to the "success" of the political parties' human resources policy, which we have noticed.

Through a radiography based on a vast research accomplished within the last months (starting with checking the political parties' data and interviews with their representatives, and also hundreds of individual phone calls to the mayors that were "claimed" by none or more than one political party) the Institute for Public Policy offers this material as an instrument for a more extensive analysis on the state of reforming the activity of the political parties, at the last moment when such an evaluation can be objectively done. From the experience of the previous research on this issue, we realized that the forthcoming elections are directly proportional with the growing number of migrated mayors and that the reasons change as we come closer to the elections' date.

Explaining the phenomenon of political migration can be considered a very difficult task. Whenever the mayors themselves hesitate to say to which party they are affiliated to (and we dealt with many situations like this during the telephonic interviews with the mayors), is still difficult to relay on an honest picture of the causes leading to political changes, made without any hesitations from one political side to a totally opposite one.

The political hitch-hiker can already be considered an important type of political actor in Romania. This type can be found in the local administration and it is represented:

- by either the category of those who leave towards the governmental party in order to get political, financial, personal or group advantages,
- either the category of those who act in the same way, apparently from concerning reasons towards the financial status of the community, trying to solve its problems "at any costs" - as a number of mayors confessed on the phone. The generous goal of sacrificing for the well-being of the community, can be, in this way, a proof for the accusations related to the subjective funds

allocations or preferential opening to information that can increase the financial revenues of the community, identified as one of the causes of the mayors' political changes from the parties that supported them during elections to the Social Democratic Party.

On the other hand, IPP identified as one of the main conclusions of the documentation carried out both in Bucharest and country-wide, the lack of "team spirit" that the political party from the today's opposition cannot succeed in consolidating by communicating and team-working with their colleagues from the local level. This results in the alienation of the affiliation feeling for the political values that were sometimes embraced, leading to the changing affiliation of an important part of the Romanian mayors towards PSD. The press signaled various times the team spirit that the PSD members have - including, or mainly, when talking about corruption accusations. The solidarity that the members of this political party show is rather famous.

Following the same demonstration, it must be underlined - like an alarm signal for the opposition parties that are recruiting their members more and more difficult out of a population that shows no interest to politics - a series of mayors that we've talked to complained that they haven't been contacted by their party colleagues (PD, PNL, PUR) for a very long while. The people at the local level, including the mayors, cannot identify themselves with the team spirit of the liberals or democrats anymore, as they used to when joining the party. A possible explanation can be offered by the fact that within most parties' list of mayors of the opposition parties can be found names that exist in all the lists of these parties, and a centralized situation and updated one does not exist at the central level. The only political party that has an up-to-date list of its mayors is PSD, but the list is not available, IPP trying multiple times to obtain it.

In reality, a series of mutations can be seen in the local political picture, after the 2000 elections' conclusions. The enthusiasm of some political leaders to create their own political parties, especially in PNTCD where the internal disputes continue till today to affect the number of locally elected representatives, was seriously decreasing in the last year. One year before the elections, the political parties are trying to regroup themselves, but unfortunately, the objectives established at the central level are not shared by the representatives at the local one (or sometimes, not even correctly communicated to the local level). Being aware that during this time they had consolidated their own position in the eyes of the local electorate (we are talking about the year 2003, three years of public function) the locally elected representatives, having gained also an important position inside the local branches of the party, are rejecting the political decisions at the central level and are slipping towards totally different political areas but that they can offer, we have been informed, the "political freedom that they need to have". We think that, some mayors developed the satisfaction of strengthening the local influence especially for those that meanwhile were elected for important political functions in the party's branches or even at the central level; at the same time, the category of the "local barons" was developed, the category that the press had so largely spoken of. It is to be mentioned the profile of the local politician Stelian Dutu from Constanta who, by a single, personal decision had left, one after another, PD, PNL, PUR and then came back to PD. He succeeded to mobilize for a similar and jointly act an impressive number of

locally elected representatives (approximately 23 mayors). A similar political movement, but whose signals did not coincide with the reality, was done by the senator Viorel Pana, an influent leader of the PD branch from where he resigned.

These motivations, combined with the lack of ability at the central level (especially of the opposition parties) to stimulate their colleagues from the local level, in order to develop and strengthen their affiliation to the party's team and to show to the ones in the countryside that finally their voice is heard by the leadership of the party, are regarded in the current material as a cause as important as the financial attraction that the opposition parties invoked.

The accession to the financial resources remains one of the main causes of the mayors' migration, and a concentrated analysis on this theme, with the necessary resources as to include a representative sample of the locally elected representatives from Romania, is vital but in a middle period of the political term in order to have the results not prejudiced by the forthcoming elections. An important role in the funds distribution still belongs to the president of the county council, who under the cover of a mathematical formula of distributing the funds among the communities of the county, remains especially opened to formulas that help the mayors coming from the same political party. As the name of the President of the Gorj County Council was so often mentioned lately, we have added only one example, from May 2003 when a series of mayors from this county joined PSD. We also find interesting the motivation presented by the migrated mayors that had claimed at that time, the fact that they no longer feel supported by the leadership of the parties they had just left.

Also strongly supporting with the examples mentioned before, the observation of some mayors from different parts of the country must be kept in mind. They say that they are very often "visited" by control institutions from Bucharest on the base of artificially fabricated reasons, according to what they declare. The Environmental Control Institution had lately done numerous checkings to the city halls and the mayors declared to the press that many of the reasons invoked were not real, those kind of controls having, in their opinion, the role to discourage the opposition mayors.

The fact that PSD had developed a strategy to attract members and also locally elected representatives is no longer a secret. In the first months of this year, PSD was instituting a committee itself, formed by leaders from Bucharest: the action group for uniting the social democratic movement, with a declared purpose to attract into the party as many members as possible, especially from the Democratic Party. The opposition parties' reaction greatly differed, ranging from Traian Basescu (PD) who addressed an international memorial on this issue and who threatened with the suspension of PD's branch which would sympathized with the idea of getting close to PSD, to PUR that, when confronted with the same danger, a few months later, asked its local leaders to strengthen the organization and to stay united. Otherwise, PUR would have to declare later that PSD's strategy brought only disadvantages, the new members signing in for PUR, as a solidarity gesture. Even in PNL there were reactions, besides the well-known mayors of this party who evoked in the press, institutional and European Organizations campaigns, the Locally Elected Representatives League, in June this year, had strongly sanctioned the drawings that were the result of "pressure and blackmail, one way of pressure being the county distribution of funds to the local communities, that are given, in most cases, only on

political criteria". Another example of this kind of pressure is the one in Alexandria where the PUR leader resigned from the party in order not to be fired from the leadership of the Agriculture Direction of Teleorman.

The results of the partially elections must be reminded as well. These elections were organized since 2000 and the results were that out of 81 elected mayors, 59 belonging to the government party (72,8%).

The political decisions from Bucharest are not always received as the leaders of the political parties would like to. Of course that every political act cannot equally satisfy everyone from all over the country; still, it is worth mentioning that the insufficient communication and consultation that, as we have noticed from discussions with the migrated mayors, affects especially the most important present opposition parties. Most leavings that affected the PNL are recorded around the merging between the National Liberal Party and the Alliance for Romania (March 2003) when some local leaders, elected in the local administration, have not been contented. Part of them migrated to PUR (as is the case with the branches from Caras Severin, Dolj, Barlad), but an important part have also migrated to PSD.

Certainly, the last category is that of the locally elected representatives that do not manifest any political responsibility and migrate indifferent to the area of the political spectrum (for instance, entire PSD branches from Neamt became PNL members from February 2003). No matter their motivations, one can notice the way these persons migrate as a group, claiming the fact that they are seeking a party to represent their political vision, whereas the true motivations are only their personal or group revenues.

Without any doubt, one cannot ask restricting the liberty of the political option, including the level of the centrally or locally elected representatives. The fact that in Romania, the majority won in the elections can be significantly changed due to migrations from different areas of the political spectrum means that there are some questions to be posed, also concerning the cohesion and the consistency of the adopted policies. Through effective recruiting and promoting strategies, as part of a human resources policy strategy that the parties should develop and follow, it is possible to ensure a responsible political class at the local level and, implicitly, a decrease of the phenomenon of political migration.

### **Coordinators of the project**

Adrian Moraru, IPP

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## **Considerations on the Relation between the Public Finances System and the Political Stability in the Local Public Administration**

The significant rate increase in the mayors' migration in the local public administration within the latest years have been influenced by various factors, including among the most important the human resource policy of the political groups and the lack of a responsibility feeling of the political class' representatives. Besides these, an important role is played by the impact that the local public finances has on the phenomenon of mayors' migration.

Although there are many initiatives for modifying the legislation and the procedures within this field in Romania, it can still be rightfully argued that the system of budgetary transfers from the central to the local level is still, on one hand, highly political, and on the other hand, it results in negative effects on the administration's activity in the field of local development.

Although it has been pointed out by the representatives of the civil society from Romania, those of the political groups, local administration and international organizations (among these being the Congress of the Local and Regional Powers and the European Commission Delegation at Bucharest), the influence of the political factor on the way the funds' distribution can be inferred, but has not yet been demonstrated. The Institute for Public Policy has had initiatives in this sense, although the main obstacle is represented by the lack of the centralized data necessary for correlating the migration phenomenon with that of the funds' distribution. Though there are data regarding the budgetary execution of all the localities in Romania, offering therefore a image on the sums of the funds allocated from the central level (in this respect, the sums for equalization of the local budgets are relevant), there is not yet a system of centralizing the localities' necessities that can be periodically updated; on this issue, the estimations made by the local authorities are not sufficient. Only a correlation between the necessities, the allocated funds and the political migration can offer the real dimension of the impact that the system of local public finances has on the political stability in the public administration.

Nevertheless, the money influence on the politics from the local level and, implicitly, on the mayors' decision to migrate especially towards the governing party, can not be contested. Within this context, it is worth mentioning the role that the County Council's President has in the funds' distribution towards the local communities that are part of the county.

In what follows, three relevant examples from 2003 are presented in order to show the political influence on the system of budgetary transfers.

1. A relevant situation for the link between the mayors' political membership and the transfers executed at the county's level is manifest at the elections' moment. In May 2003 the partial elections took place in various local communities from Romania, especially in the rural residency. In Gorj county the argument frequently used, to put it more precisely the threat formulated by the president of the County Council in order to persuade the electorate to vote in favor of the PSD mayors has been that their localities will no longer receive



funds for railways and social assistance; this fact clearly shows that at least in Gorj county is within the County Council's President's power to direct these money, thus not taking into consideration the criteria included in the legislation.

2. The same essential element, that of the power that the County Council's President has, as part of his/her role in distributing the equalization funds is also demonstrated by the declarations made when the above-mentioned presidents from Satu Mare and Teleorman organized the Referendum for adopting the Law on Reviewing the Constitution. Although there is not a direct link with the phenomenon of political migration, this example shows that, despite some criteria included in the law, the County Council's Presidents can manage the funds for the local communities according to their wish.
3. The affiliation of the mayors to the governing party, that possesses the necessary financial means, proves to be an advantage and can constitute a solid reason for the mayors' migration when it comes to the funds allocated for investments, which are essential for the local development in Romania. The Government created with one year before the elections a mechanism to create the premises to simplify the transfer of the funds towards the mayors with membership in the governing party. We are here referring to the protocol accomplished in April 2003 by the Minister of Administration and Internal Affairs and the Romanian Commercial Bank, creating certain facilities in granting the municipal credits, although there are legal provisions that allow contracting borrowings without the Government's intermediary. This example comes to support the idea that being mayor, as a representative of the governing party, means to have access to the funds. Supporting the same idea are the examples for granting the guarantees for the external borrowings and distributing the sums from various special funds.

The examples previously mentioned represent arguments to support the idea that the local financial autonomy in Romania is still more of a goal to attain than a real fact. The situation is more dramatic in the rural place of residence. While the urban communities have multiple means to supplement their incomes, the villages are generally dependent on transfers and equalization funds. This fact can be concluded in the idea that the migration is higher in the rural residence due to budgetary reasons; about the same place of residence it can also be said that the ideological considerations are more fuzzy, compared to the urban residence.

One of the instruments that can be used for diminishing the political influence on the budgetary transfers system is represented by the legislation. The Law 189/1998 on the local public finances had a lot of deficiencies from this point of view. In June 2003 the Emergency Ordinance no.45 that will be in operation in January 2004 and, which, not only does not solve certain deficiencies of the Law 189 but, in certain aspects, represents a step downwards.

One of the most obvious aspects regarding this issue refers to the criteria for distributing the equalization funds. Although in the article no.29 of the Ordinance certain criteria have been established, the impact of these modifications is canceled by introducing a County Commission, formed from the President of the County Council, the Prefect and the representatives of the associative structures of the local authorities (components of the Local Authorities Federation in Romania) and the

general director of the Local Public Finance of the County. The commission's role is to consult, as a result of applying the criteria, the county's mayors in order to evaluate the necessities and, accordingly, to decide the sums' distribution. Besides obvious legislative errors (including the Prefect in the Commission, the one that is supposed to supervise enforcement of the provisions, and not their implementation or appointing the Federation's component associations), the commission is more a factor in favor of the political interference in the system of transfers than an element against it.

In what follows some recommendations that concern diminishing the degree of political influence of the system of budgetary transfers to the local public administration will be presented:

- The Emergency Ordinance 45/2003 requires considerable reviewing among which we recommend:
  - The formula of the financial capacity of the localities used in the funds' distribution to be described along other objective criteria
  - The Commission responsible for organizing the consultations with the mayors should be dissolved and the role of the County's institutions in the funds' distribution removed.
  - Giving the possibility to the local communities to directly negotiate with the Finance Minister according to some clear and objective criteria with the aim of distributing the equalization funds.
- Continuing the process of fiscal decentralization and that of the public services, as well as correlating these two for a real autonomy of the local communities from Romania.
- Instituting clear sanctions for those responsible in distributing the funds to the local communities (presidents of the County Council at that time) that conditions the budgetary transfers' towards some actions with political influence of the county's mayors.
- Constructing a database, administered by the Administration and Internal Affairs Minister, that can be permanently updated with information on the localities' profile and their necessities.

Anca Ghinea, IPP

## **Main Conclusions from the Graphical Representations**

The analysis of the statistical data presenting the situation of those mayors that migrated after closing the elections from 2000 shows that in 2001, as it has been shown in the previous study carried out by the Institute for Public Policy, 651 mayors migrated, meaning a percentage of 22%. The evolution of the data in 2003 shows an almost similar increase comparing to 2001. Therefore, between 2001 and 2003, other 617 mayors changed their political affiliation (20.73%). As a result of this, an alarming percentage of 37.21% from the 2003 mayors are within other party than the one that won the 2000 elections.

The destination of most migrated mayors is represented by the Social Democratic Party (PSD) that has increased from 35.5% mayors in 2000 to 53.6% in 2001 and 64.4% in 2003. In total, comparing to 2000, there is an increase of 29.9% of the mayors that are members of this party. A relative constant situation can be noticed, not surprisingly, at the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), where the conflicts within the party did not result in major outcomes regarding the mayors' number. Hence, comparing to 2000, UDMR has a slight increase of 0.3%. Again a positive evolution can be found for the Humanist Party in Romania (PUR) - a percentage of 1.5%, the main cause being the accomplished alliance with PSD and the presence at governing for a considerable period. In what follows, as a result of the recent split of the two parties, it is likely that a certain decrease should occur among the PUR mayors.

Other decreases, if not dramatic, then still important for Romania's democratic system, can be noticed at the main opposition parties. The not sufficiently coherent human resource and especially, recruiting policies determined the Democratic Party (PD) to lose in 2003 a percentage of 6% from its mayors, whereas the National Liberal Party (PNL) lost 1.6%. The important losses, at least in PNL's case took place in the last two years. If in 2000 there were a percentage of 8.5% mayors of this party, in 2001, we can remark an increase to 8.9%, a percentage that decreased in 2003 to 6.9 %. The Greater Romania Party (PRM) has a decrease, not a very large one, of only 1% compared to 2000.

Due to the evolutions from the political life, to merging and splitting, a lot of political parties lost their mayors elected in 2000. ApR is an example in this sense, as a result of merging with PNL, all its 284 mayors are presently in other parties, PNL being only one of them.

An important conclusion resulting from the statistical data analysis is the fact that most of the migrated mayors are from the rural place of residence. One of the main causes explaining this phenomenon has been previously described in the present report and refers to the dependence of the rural communities on the state budget. This fact further means that the mayors from rural residency are more vulnerable to the political influence affecting the current activities and the development of the corresponding communities.

At the same time, it can be said that the mayors elected in the second round of the 2000 elections are more vulnerable as well, whereas the mayors selected in the first

round are sufficiently confident in the local communities' support; this is why, in the latest mentioned case, the political affiliation does not change, as there are not sufficient reasons to determine this change.

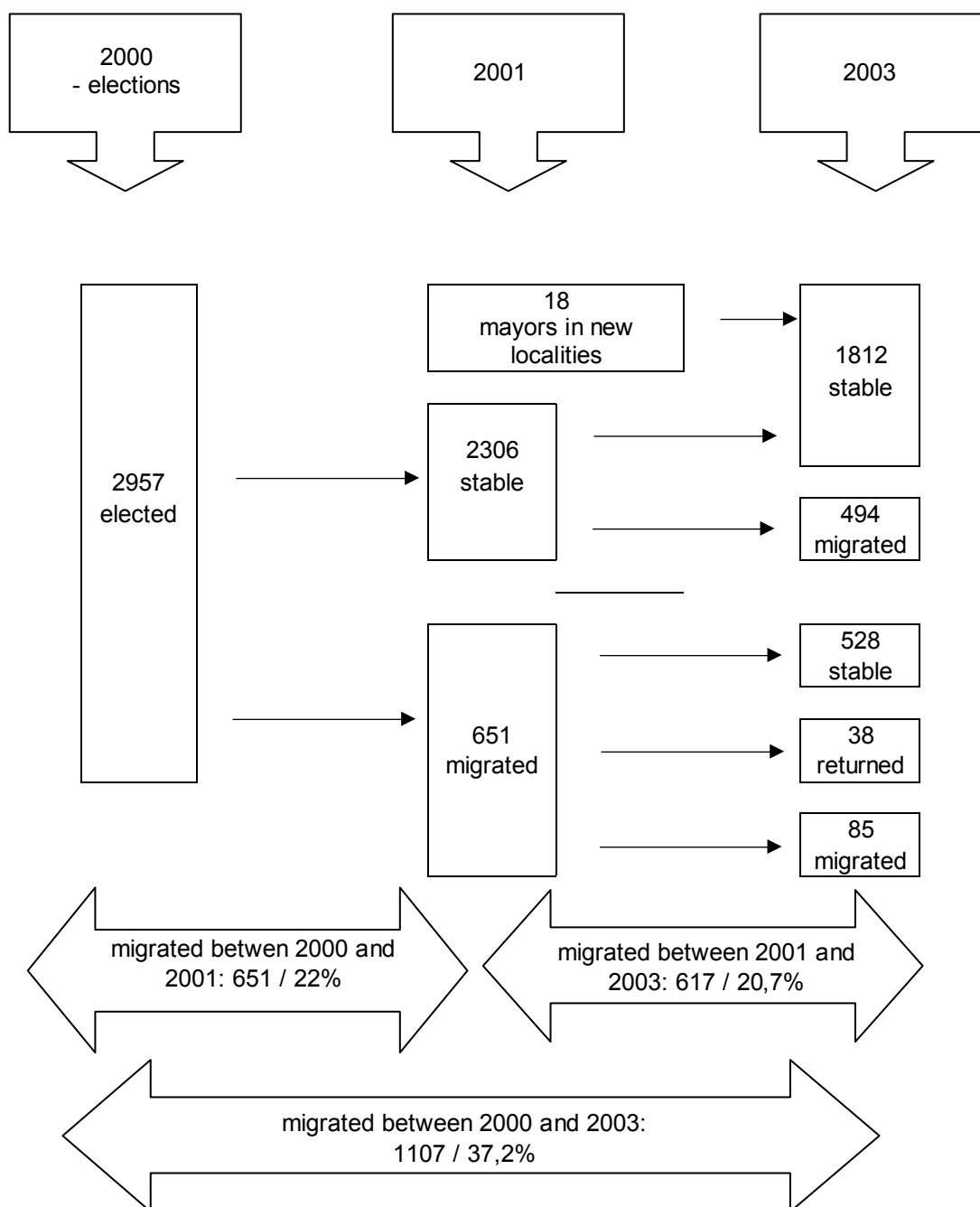
A classification of the counties shows that most mayors that migrated in 2003 come from Sibiu, Constanta, Teleorman, Bistrita-Nasaud and Neamt where there is a migration of more than 50%; at the end of the classification, the counties most stable from this point of view can be found, respectively, Harghita, Covasna and Cluj with a migration level under 20%.

### **Statistics analysis and graphic representations**

Adrian Moraru, IPP

Monica Toba, IPP

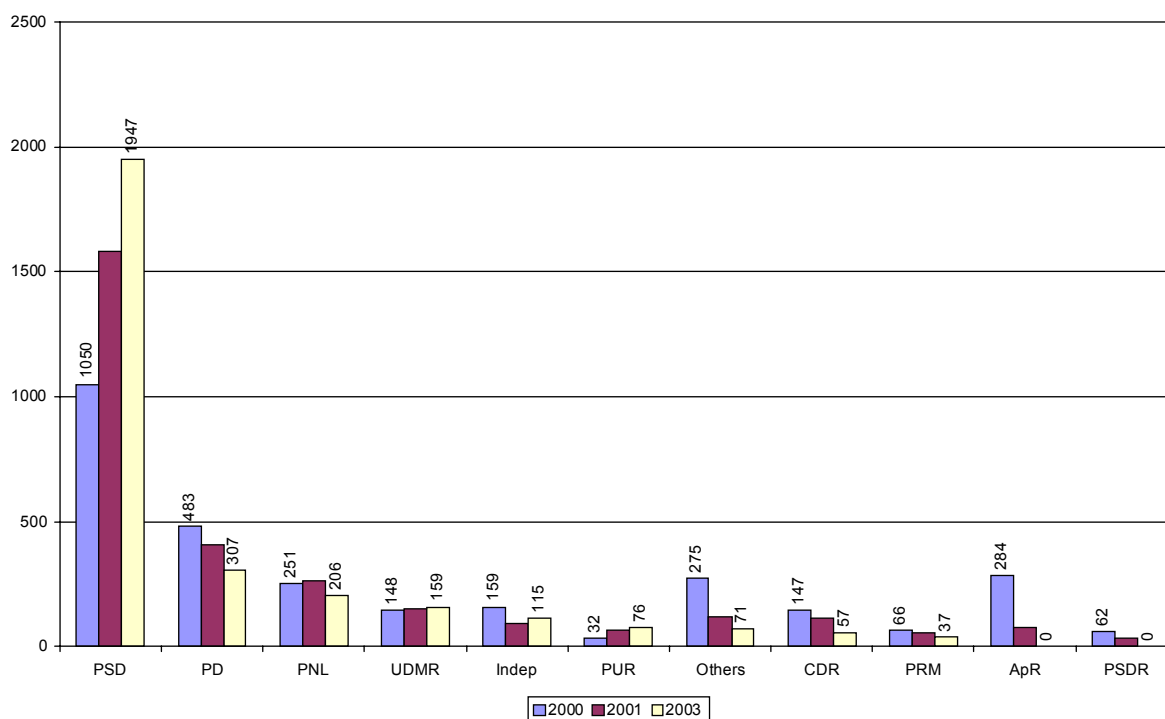
### Dynamic of migration



## IPP - Dynamics of Mayors' Political Affiliation: the Case of Romania 2000 - 2003

Evolution of mayors' number  
elections 2000 results - IPP 2001 monitoring - IPP 2003 monitoring

Rank	Party	2000 Counts	2001 Counts	2003 Counts	2000 Percent	2001 Percent	2003 Percent	Increase %
1	PSD	1050	1584	1947	35,5%	53,6%	65,4%	<b>29,9%</b>
2	PD	483	407	307	16,3%	13,8%	10,3%	-6,0%
3	PNL	251	262	206	8,5%	8,9%	6,9%	-1,6%
4	UDMR	148	149	159	5,0%	5,0%	5,3%	<b>0,3%</b>
5	Indep	159	90	115	5,4%	3,0%	3,9%	-1,5%
6	PUR	32	64	76	1,1%	2,2%	2,6%	<b>1,5%</b>
7	Others	275	121	71	9,3%	4,1%	2,4%	-6,9%
8	CDR	147	116	57	5,0%	3,9%	1,9%	-3,1%
9	PRM	66	53	37	2,2%	1,8%	1,2%	-1,0%
10	ApR	284	79	0	9,6%	2,7%	0,0%	-9,6%
11	PSDR	62	32	0	2,1%	1,1%	0,0%	-2,1%

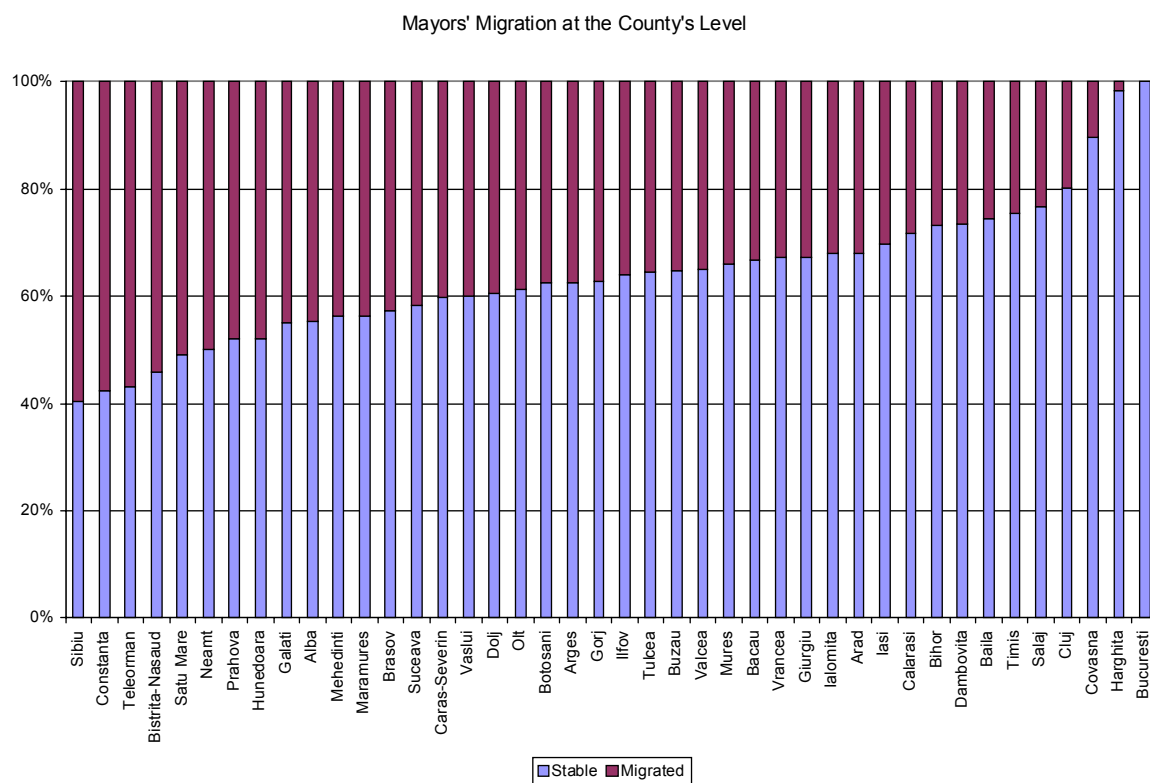
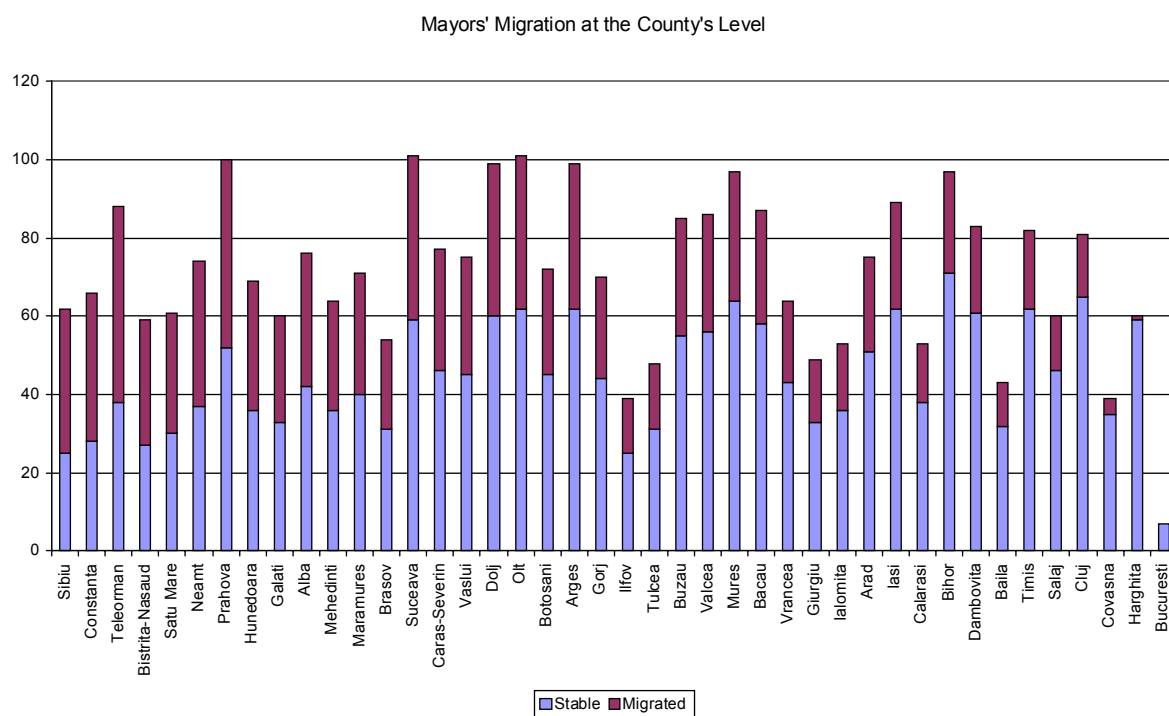


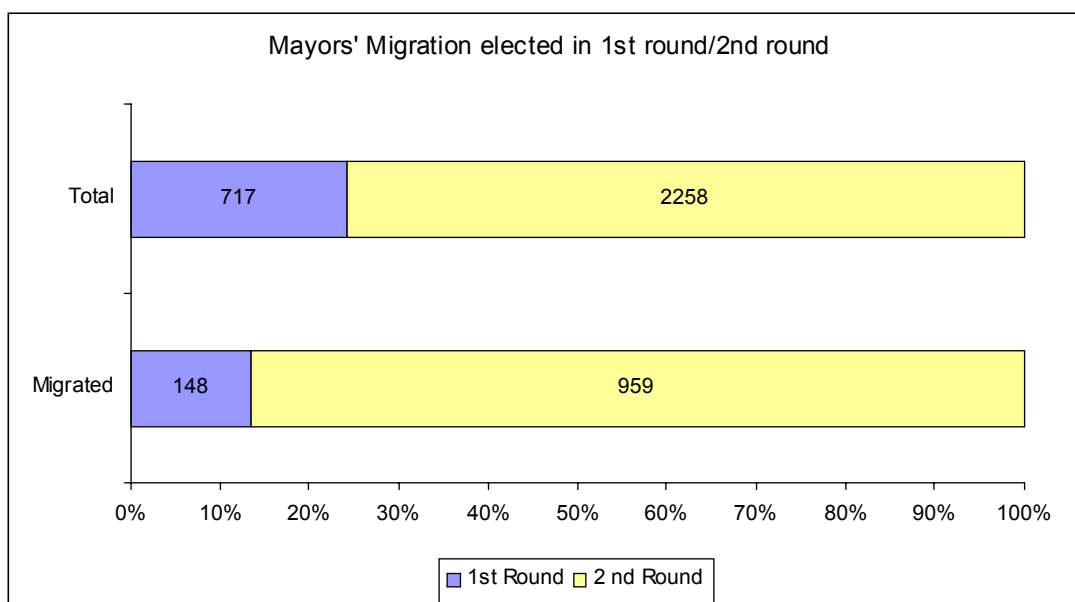
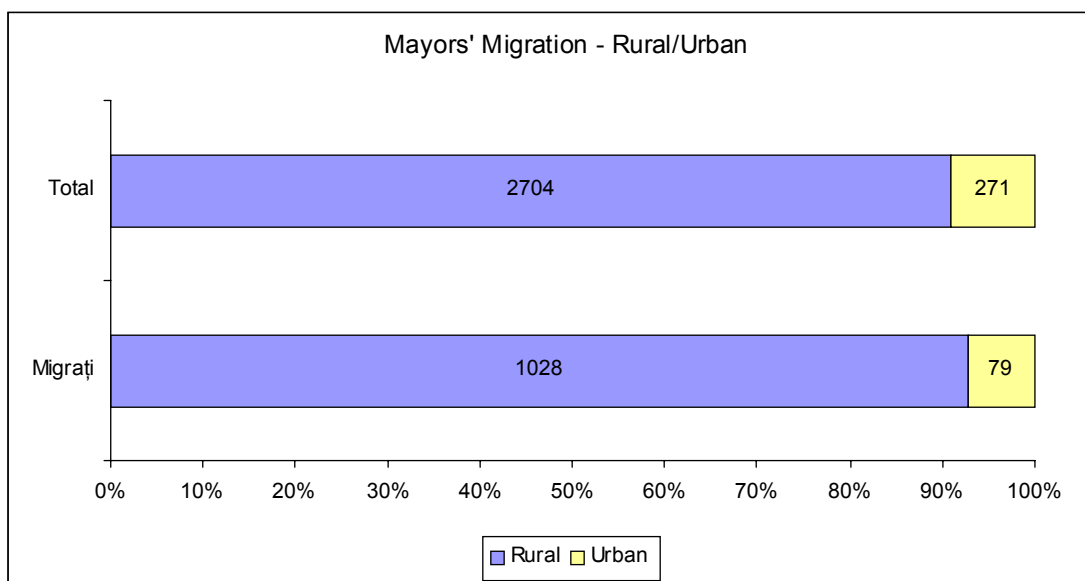
Mayors' Migration at the County's Level  
2000 - 2003

Judet	Stable	Migrated	Total	Stable	Migrated
Sibiu	25	37	62	40,3%	59,7%
Constanta	28	38	66	42,4%	57,6%
Teleorman	38	50	88	43,2%	56,8%
Bistrita-Nasaud	27	32	59	45,8%	54,2%
Satu Mare	30	31	61	49,2%	50,8%
Neamt	37	37	74	50,0%	50,0%
Prahova	52	48	100	52,0%	48,0%
Hunedoara	36	33	69	52,2%	47,8%
Galati	33	27	60	55,0%	45,0%
Alba	42	34	76	55,3%	44,7%
Mehedinti	36	28	64	56,3%	43,8%
Maramures	40	31	71	56,3%	43,7%
Brasov	31	23	54	57,4%	42,6%
Suceava	59	42	101	58,4%	41,6%
Caras-Severin	46	31	77	59,7%	40,3%
Vaslui	45	30	75	60,0%	40,0%
Dolj	60	39	99	60,6%	39,4%
Olt	62	39	101	61,4%	38,6%
Botosani	45	27	72	62,5%	37,5%
Arges	62	37	99	62,6%	37,4%
Gorj	44	26	70	62,9%	37,1%
Ilfov	25	14	39	64,1%	35,9%
Tulcea	31	17	48	64,6%	35,4%
Buzau	55	30	85	64,7%	35,3%
Valcea	56	30	86	65,1%	34,9%
Mures	64	33	97	66,0%	34,0%
Bacau	58	29	87	66,7%	33,3%
Vrancea	43	21	64	67,2%	32,8%
Giurgiu	33	16	49	67,3%	32,7%
Ialomita	36	17	53	67,9%	32,1%
Arad	51	24	75	68,0%	32,0%
Iasi	62	27	89	69,7%	30,3%
Calarasi	38	15	53	71,7%	28,3%
Bihor	71	26	97	73,2%	26,8%
Dambovita	61	22	83	73,5%	26,5%
Baila	32	11	43	74,4%	25,6%
Timis	62	20	82	75,6%	24,4%
Salaj	46	14	60	76,7%	23,3%
Cluj	65	16	81	80,2%	19,8%
Covasna	35	4	39	89,7%	10,3%
Harghita	59	1	60	98,3%	1,7%
Bucuresti	7	0	7	100,0%	0%
Total	1868	1107	2975	62,8%	37,2%

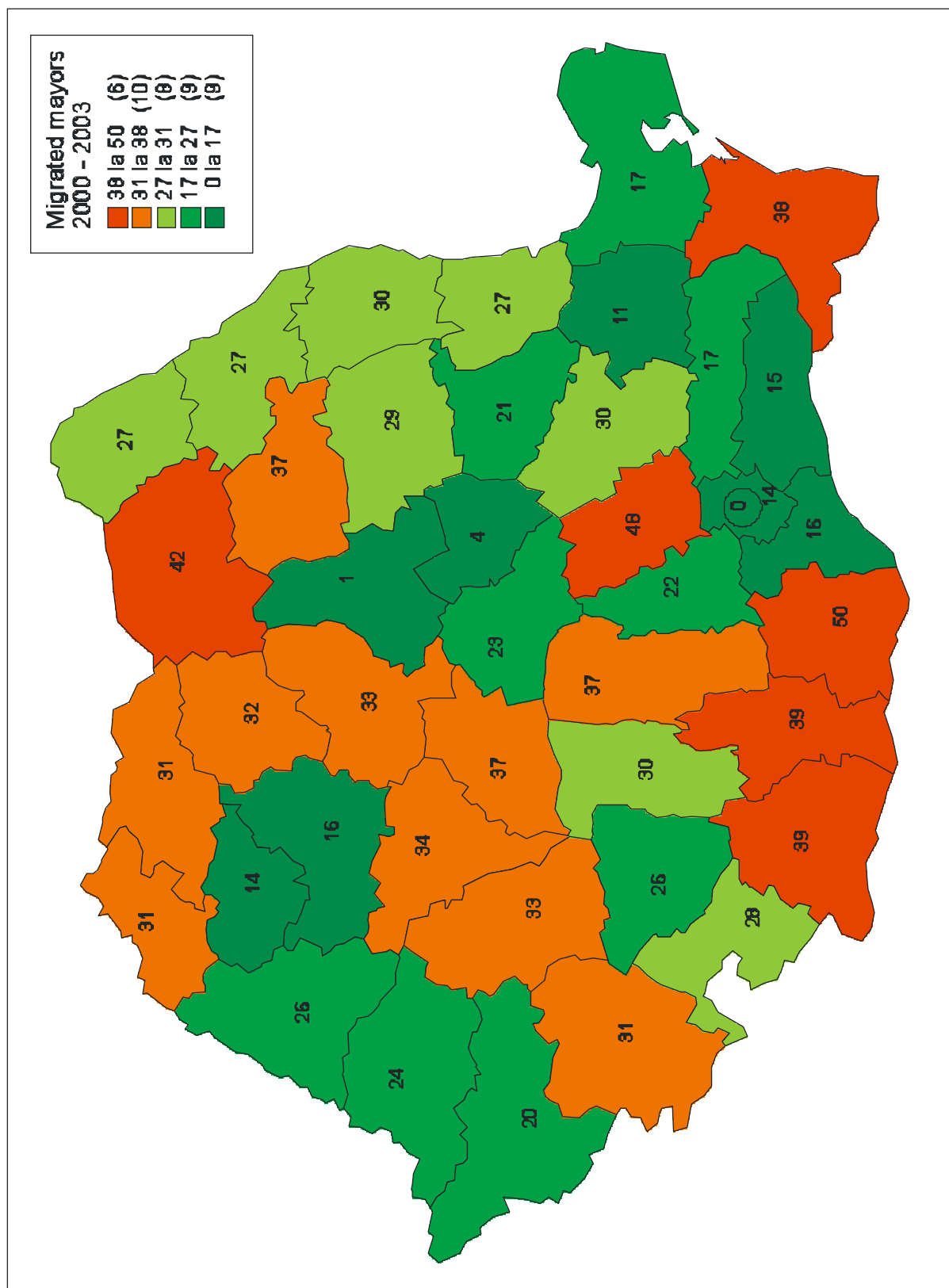


# IPP - Dynamics of Mayors' Political Affiliation: the Case of Romania 2000 - 2003

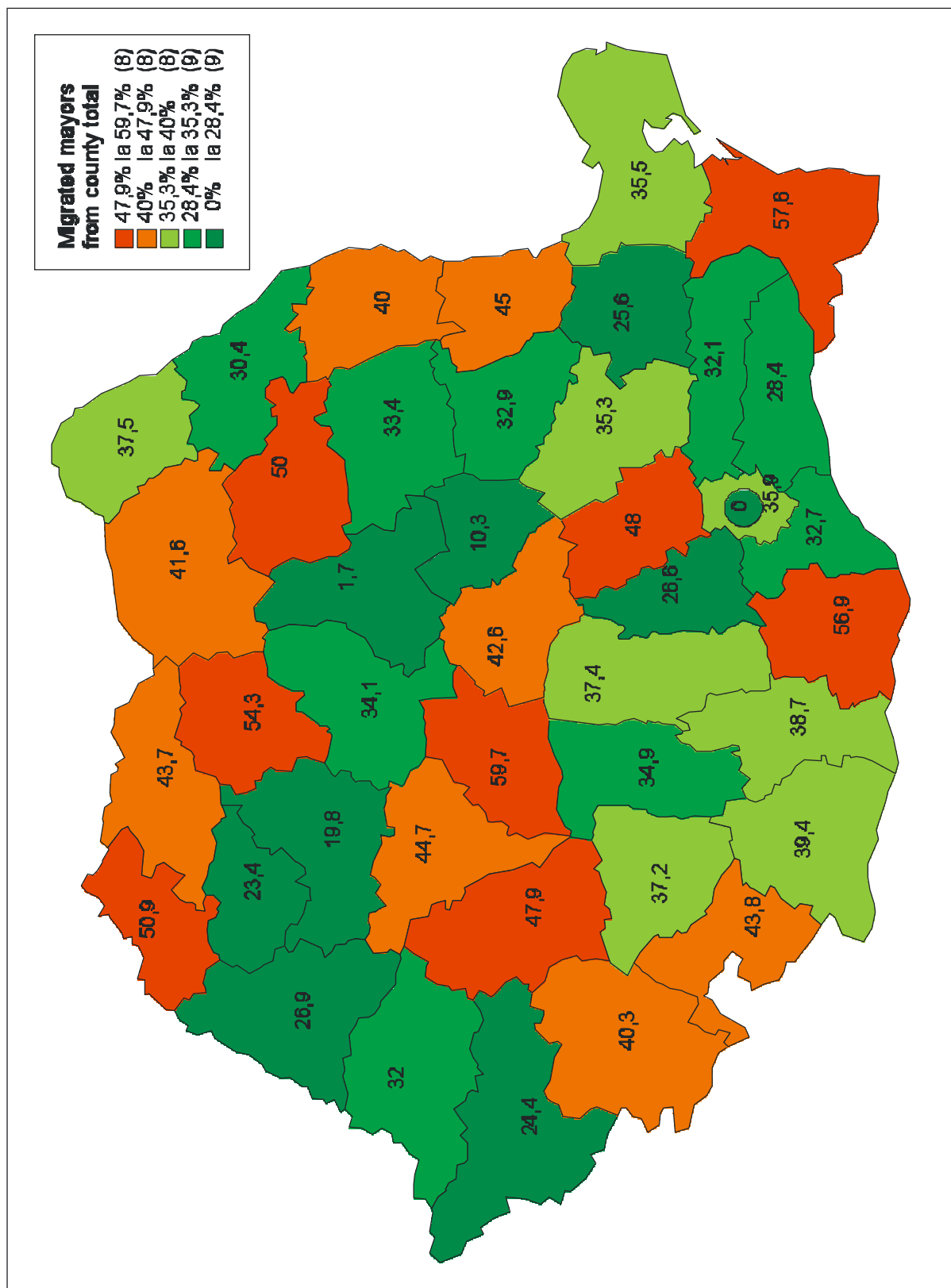




Number of migrated mayors  
2000 - 2003



Percentage of migrated mayors within county total  
2000 - 2003



Percentage of migrated mayors within county total  
2000 - 2003

